

# Implementing Formative Assessment PD

Rhode Island's "Linking Learning and Assessment" course is a year-long online course designed to support school-level implementation of classroom formative assessment. The online course and supporting materials have been designed for flexibility to meet the varied needs of districts and schools.

## **a) Who will be participating? How does participation relate to our RTTT allocation?**

Under RTTT, urban and urban-ring LEAs committed to having a minimum 70% of mathematics, ELA, elementary, special education, and ESL teachers complete the Formative Assessment PD. Suburban LEAs committed to a minimum of 4 teachers per building.

**Flexibility Factor:** In suburban LEAs, principals can choose any 4 teachers. However, the resource will be available to *all* teachers through the IMS and LEAs are encouraged to seek wider participation.

## **b) When will teachers begin and end their course participation?**

The course is designed to run the length of a school year. Participants should complete an online module one month, participate in a Community of Practice meeting around that module the next month, and so on throughout the academic year (see Sample Implementation Timeline).

**Flexibility Factor:** LEAs can begin implementation in September 2012, with some or all of their schools, or in September 2013.

## **c) When will teachers access the online course?**

By mid-September 2012, the modules will be on the IMS and available to teachers 24/7.

**Flexibility Factor:** Some teachers might prefer to access the modules at home, during evenings or weekends. However, LEAs have different contract agreements with regard to what teachers can be asked/expected to do outside of regular school hours. The modules are chunked into short lessons and, therefore, could be accessed during prep periods, common planning time, or scheduled professional development days. Community of Practice

meetings, which should occur every other month, can be scheduled during grade-level or content-team meetings, after school, or during scheduled professional development days.

**d) Is there funding available for this initiative?**

Yes, LEAs all have local funds allocated to the formative assessment project, under Instructional Improvement Systems in the Race to the Top budget. Budgets vary based on the size and urbanicity of the district.

**Flexibility Factor:** LEAs are permitted to use these funds for replacement costs and/or stipends for Formative Assessment Facilitators or for teachers to complete the online course.

**e) What is the role of course facilitators? How are they selected and/or trained?**

Teachers can participate in the online course without a facilitated component. Because of the importance of teacher dialogue and reflection in adopting classroom formative assessment, the course includes an optional component for teachers to participate in five facilitated meetings, called Communities of Practice, to take place in small groups (6-12 educators) at the close of each of the five modules. These meetings are designed for teachers to be able to reflect on key learnings and apply the course ideas within their own context.

In order to support effective use of the CoP time, RIDE has developed five facilitation guides. Each guide offers facilitators an overview of key content from the module, structured activities through which to review course content, and extension activities to support ongoing work.

**Flexibility Factor:** CoP meetings can be organized and run by an FA facilitator, a teacher leader who is championing the formative assessment work in his or her school or district. The LEA or school can determine who, if anyone, takes on this role. A short (optional) facilitator orientation session will be offered in August 2012 to explain the facilitator's role, explore the online design, and review facilitator materials.

**f) What is the role of the principal? How involved do I need to be in the FA initiative?**

There are no requirements under RTTT that principals participate in this initiative. However, in our pilot we saw a direct correlation between principal involvement and the satisfaction and efficacy of their teams.

**Flexibility Factor:** At a minimum, principals should read through the one-pagers on each module to gain a basic understanding of what his or her teachers are learning/being asked to do. Principals are highly encouraged to go through the online modules themselves to gain an understanding of the formative assessment process and their role in ensuring successful adoption. By gaining this understanding, principals will be better able to address barriers to implementation and support his or her faculty's professional growth in this area. They can also choose to sit in on some or all CoP meetings.

*Below are some vignettes that describe how three different school leaders have chosen to implement this initiative, with varying levels of principal, facilitator, and teacher involvement.*

### **Rural elementary school**

Mr. Jones is the principal of a rural elementary school with a faculty of 16. He has been interested in formative assessment for a few years and decides to launch the professional development in September with his entire faculty. He divides them into three small Communities of Practice (K-1, 2-3, 4-5) and recommends that each teacher set his or her Professional Growth Goal around the formative assessment process. Beginning in September, teachers will complete one of the online modules every other month. He encourages his faculty to access the modules during their prep periods, though many faculty members indicate that they would prefer to complete the modules after school or at home. In alternate months, teachers will meet with their Community of Practice (60 minutes after school) to discuss the content and share the work they've been doing in their classrooms around formative assessment. He does not have anyone who attended Facilitator Orientation, but he has asked that one person from each team volunteer to facilitate the meetings, using the Facilitation Guides provided by RIDE. Based upon the experience of the team facilitators, Mr. Jones plans to attend the grade 4-5 CoP in October, the K-1 CoP in December, and the 2-3 CoP in February in order to see what his teachers are learning and think about how to better support them through observations and walk-throughs.

### **Urban-Ring elementary school**

Mrs. Pavia is the principal of a large urban-ring elementary school. Under RTTT, she agreed to have 70% of her teachers complete the Formative Assessment PD. Given that her faculty has been organized into Professional Learning Communities for a few years now, she decides to build upon that existing structure for the implementation of this initiative. Though they will not have designated FA facilitators or be using the facilitator guides, each grade-level PLC has a lead teacher and Mrs. Pavia sets the expectation that the formative assessment work should be regularly discussed at at least one PLC meeting per month. Furthermore, she assigns one module to each grade level team and asks them to prepare a short presentation and extension activity, based upon the content of that module, to share at a monthly faculty meeting. Mrs. Pavia plans to go through the online modules herself and use these monthly faculty meetings as an opportunity to talk to her faculty about implementation and gauge which grade level teams need the most support.

### **Urban middle school**

Dr. Stovell is the principal of a middle school in an urban district. Per her RTTT commitments, 70% of her core teachers will be completing the Formative Assessment PD. She has planned to give them time to complete the modules during designated professional development half-days throughout the year. She asks her faculty to organize their Communities of Practice by grade level (three teachers per grade in each core area for a total of 12 teachers in each CoP). Grade-level team meetings occur every other week (alternating with department team meetings) and they will use one of these meetings every other month for their CoP around formative assessment. She has one teacher leader who attended Facilitator Orientation who will sit in on and co-facilitate all CoP meetings. Dr. Stovell plans to attend the ELA and Math team meetings in October and the Social Studies and Science meetings in December (and so on throughout the year), in order to observe the successes and challenges they're experiencing with implementation.

### **Suburban high school**

Mr. Maynard is the principal of a large high school in a suburban district. They have been involved in the Dana Center Curriculum work in Science and Math and he hopes that the Scope and Sequence and Units of Study in these content areas will be a good foundation for the formative assessment PD. Under RTTT, he has committed to have four people complete the Formative Assessment PD. He asks the English, History, Science, and Mathematics Department Heads to go through the online course and participate in a Community of Practice. The Science Department Head volunteers to be the group's facilitator and attends the Facilitator Orientation in August. Mr. Maynard plans to complete the modules as well and participate in the Community of Practice meetings every other month. Next year, he plans to extend the initiative to the rest of his faculty, with the Department Heads serving as facilitators of their departments' Communities of Practice.